

**ELEMENTS OF SCHOOL-WIDE REFORM**

The following policy will be effective beginning with the ninth grade class entering high school during the 2009-2010 school year.

**1. READY CORE**

All students will have access to a rigorous curriculum that includes challenging subject matter, emphasizes depth rather than breadth of coverage, emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving, and promotes responsible citizenship and lifelong learning. The curriculum will be tied to the vision of the high school graduate and to the Tennessee Curriculum Standards. Teachers, parents, and students will hold high expectations for all. Schools will communicate high expectations to students, parents, business and industry, and the community.

**Policy Implications:**

- a. All students will meet the following READY CORE requirements:
  - English 4 units
  - Mathematics 4 units
  - Science 3 units
  - Social Studies 3 units
  - Health, Physical Fitness and Wellness 1.5 units
  - Personal Finance 0.5 units
- b. The core curriculum and additional courses required for postsecondary/workforce training readiness will be tied to the vision of the high school graduate and to the Tennessee Curriculum Standards.

To earn a regular high school diploma, students must earn the prescribed 22 credit minimum and have a satisfactory record of attendance and discipline. Schools will minimize tracking of students by ability, eliminate core classes taught below the college preparation level, and provide all students a challenging course of study.

- c. Students with disabilities will be included in regular classes to the degree possible and with appropriate support and accommodations. To earn a regular high school diploma, students with disabilities must earn the prescribed 22 credit minimum. Students failing to earn a yearly grade of 70 in a course that has an end-of-course test and whose disability adversely affects performance in that test will be allowed, through an approved process, to add to their end-of-course assessment scores by demonstrating the state identified core knowledge and skills contained within that course through an alternative performance-based assessment. The necessity for an alternative performance-based assessment must be determined through the student's individualized education plan (IEP). The alternative performance-based assessment will be evaluated using a state approved rubric.
- d. A special education diploma may be awarded at the end of their fourth year of high school to students with disabilities who have (1) not met the requirements for a high school diploma, (2) have satisfactorily completed an individualized education program, and (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. Students who obtain the special education diploma may continue to work towards

the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two years old.

- e. Students are required to complete four units of mathematics including Algebra I and II, Geometry or the equivalent, and another mathematics course beyond Algebra I. Students must be enrolled in a mathematics course each school year. The Bridge Math course is designed for students who have not scored 19 or higher on the ACT mathematics subtest or a 460 on the SAT mathematics subtest by the beginning of the senior year.

Students with qualifying disabilities in math as documented in the individualized education program shall be required to achieve at least Algebra I and Geometry (or the equivalent). The required number of credits in math will be achieved through strategies such as, but not limited to, increased time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations as determined by the IEP team.

- f. In order to meet the demand for mathematics teachers, Algebra I and any math course in grades 6-8 may be taught by a licensed teacher with the appropriate 7-12 math endorsement OR by a teacher with a professional license pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-02-04-.01(1)(c), an endorsement to teach through at least grade 8, a passing score on the middle school math PRAXIS, and a) successful completion of a state-approved training, b) a passing score on a supplemental test in the content area approved for this purpose by the department, or c) a one year, two year, or three year TVAAS score of Level 5 in Algebra I in the 2011-12, 2012-13, or 2013-14 school years. All courses above Algebra I including Core Math II must be taught by a teacher in endorsed in mathematics 7-12.
- g. Students must complete Biology, Chemistry or Physics, and a third lab science. Students with qualifying disabilities in reading and/or math as documented in the individualized education program shall be required to achieve at least Biology I and two other lab science credits. The required number of credits in science will be achieved through strategies such as, but not limited to, increased time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations as determined by the IEP team.
- h. The social studies curriculum will be consistent with national goals and with admissions requirements of Tennessee public institutions of higher education; will include the study of United States History, World History/World Geography, Economics and Government; and will incorporate a global perspective.
- i. Students must complete  $\frac{1}{2}$  credit in Personal Finance.
- j. The health, physical fitness and wellness curriculum will integrate concepts from each of these areas and may be taught by a team of teachers from one or more teaching areas, including health, physical education, family and nutrition sciences, and health sciences education. Participation in marching band and interscholastic athletics may not be substituted for this aspect of the core curriculum. Credit earned in two years of JROTC may be substituted provided the local system has complied with requirements of the State Board of Education.
- k. Students are required to complete an additional  $\frac{1}{2}$  credit in Physical Education. This requirement may be met by substituting a documented and equivalent time of physical activity in marching band, JROTC, cheerleading, interscholastic

athletics, school sponsored intramural athletics, and other areas approved by the local board of education.

1. Computer education is not specifically listed in the READY CORE curriculum. However, TCA 49-6-1010 requires every candidate for graduation to have received a full year of computer education at some time during the candidate's educational career.

## 2. ONE PATH

All students will pursue a focused program of study preparing them for postsecondary study. While all students may not enter postsecondary training immediately following high school, they must be prepared for lifelong learning.

### Policy Implications:

- a. Students will complete an elective focus of no less than three credits. The elective focus may be CTE, science and math, humanities, fine arts, AP/IB, or other areas approved by the local board of education. Students completing a CTE elective focus must complete three units in the same CTE program area or state-approved program of study. Students completing a CTE elective focus in Trade & Industrial Education must complete three credits from one of the eight state-approved focus areas. (The eight focus areas are identified in Board Policy 3.208, #19. Trade and Industrial Education.)

Schools should make every effort to ensure that all students complete a state or locally approved elective focus, however schools may waive the elective focus requirement for those students who transfer during the junior or senior year to a Tennessee high school from a school in another state, if the completion of the elective focus would prevent or delay graduation.

Students who begin an elective focus in a Tennessee high school and transfer during the junior or senior year to another Tennessee high school may, with the permission of the Director of Schools, have the elective focus requirement waived if the receiving school does not offer the same elective focus area and is unable to offer related coursework to complete a state or locally approved focus area, or if the completion of the elective focus would prevent or delay graduation.

- b. Local boards of education are encouraged to consider requirements for students to complete a capstone experience such as, but not limited to:
  - senior project
  - Virtual Enterprise
  - internship
  - externship
  - work-based learning
  - service learning (minimum of 40 hours)
  - community service (minimum of 40 hours)
- c. Students will complete two units of the same foreign language and one unit of fine arts except in limited circumstances (students not planning to attend the

university), schools may waive the two units of foreign language and one unit of fine arts to expand and enhance their elective focus.

d. Students will be required to complete a total of 22 units, including electives. Since most high schools offer the opportunity to take at least 6 units each year, for a total of 24 units, students will actually have an opportunity to take a considerable number of electives. Students who attend high schools using block scheduling have the opportunity to take a total of 32 units.

e. Graduation with Honors, State Honors, and State Distinction

1. School systems may design student recognition programs that allow students to graduate with honors if they have met the graduation requirements and have obtained an overall grade point average of at least a 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. School systems may set a higher GPA at their discretion. School systems may specify additional requirements, such as requiring students to demonstrate performance of distinction in one (1) or more areas.

2. Students who score at or above all the subject area readiness benchmarks on the ACT or equivalent score on the SAT will graduate with state honors.

Each local school board shall develop a policy prescribing how students graduating with “state honors” will be noted and recognized.

3. Students will be recognized as graduating with “state distinction” by attaining a B or better average and completing one of the following:

- (i) earn a nationally recognized industry certification
- (ii) participate in at least one (1) of the Governor’s Schools
- (iii) participate in one (1) of the state’s ALL State musical organizations
- (iv) be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semi-Finalist
- (v) attain a score of thirty one (31) or higher composite score on the ACT
- (vi) attain a score of three (3) or higher on at least two advanced placement exams
- (vii) successfully complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
- (viii) earn twelve (12) or more semester hours of transcribed postsecondary credit

Each local school board shall develop a policy prescribing how students graduating with “state distinction” will be noted and recognized.

### 3. A FOCUSED PLAN OF STUDY

Prior to the 9th grade, all students will develop an initial four-year plan of focused and purposeful high school study. The plan will be reviewed annually and will connect the student's academic and career goals to school.

Policy Implications:

- a. When the student is in the eighth grade, the student, parent/guardian(s), and faculty advisor or guidance counselor will jointly prepare an initial four-year plan of focused, purposeful high school study.
- b. By the end of tenth grade, the student, parent/guardian(s) and school will focus the plan to ensure the completion of the program of study and a smooth transition to postsecondary study and work. An integral aspect of the planning process is the assumption that the student will be involved in some form of postsecondary education/training. The plan should contain information about career options and long-term goals supported by the plan through the courses to be taken in the eleventh and twelfth grades as well as courses to be taken at the postsecondary level.
- c. The plan of study will be reviewed annually by the student and faculty advisor or guidance counselor, and revised based on changes in the student's interests and career goals. Results of various types of assessments will also be used in adjusting the plan of study.
- d. High school and middle grades faculty will collaborate in planning curriculum and the transition between middle grades and high school.

#### 4. ACTIVE LEARNING

Schools will design curriculum and implement instruction in ways that invite students to participate in their own learning. In this teaching and learning environment the teacher serves as facilitator. In both academic and technical courses, teachers will emphasize active learning strategies such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, technology, and the application of knowledge to real life situations. Students will focus on fewer topics within courses but will engage them in greater depth.

Policy Implications:

- a. Academic and technical faculty will work together to facilitate the sharing of ideas and the use of active learning strategies.
- b. Applied academic courses, which use hands-on strategies, will be implemented in high schools statewide. Appropriate labs and staff development will be provided.
- c. Calculators will be provided for use in all mathematics courses.
- d. Technology will be used to access information, solve real life problems, and improve instruction.
- e. Schools will regularly inform parents regarding expectations of the school and new modes of learning

## 5. WORK-BASED LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Students will have access to a system of structured work-based learning (WBL) experiences that allows them to apply classroom theories to practical problems and to explore career options. The following Work-Based Learning Framework will govern all WBL experiences. The Department of Education will provide school systems with a Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide consistent with this framework to address training requirements, program expectations, and legal requirements.

### Policy Implications:

- a. **Structure of the Program.** Structured WBL experiences may be paid or unpaid, may occur in public, private, or non-profit organizations or on-site at the school; they may occur during or outside of school hours and may result in the attainment of academic credit when WBL course standards are met. In all instances, all federal and state labor laws shall be observed.
- b. **Coordination of the Program.** A Work-Based Learning Coordinator, in conjunction with a team of supervising teachers as outlined by the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide, will be responsible for (a) the recruitment of appropriate work sites, (b) coordination of ongoing communications with workplace mentors, (c) facilitation of instruction that meets the WBL Framework requirements and WBL course standards where applicable, and (d) all required documentation related to student work, safety training, and job placements as outlined by the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Implementation Guide.
- c. **Supervision of Students.** A designated workplace mentor will supervise each student. Regular monitoring will be provided by a dedicated supervising teacher or the WBL Coordinator to ensure WBL Framework requirements are met as outlined in the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.
- d. **Development of Personalized Learning Plans.** A personalized learning plan will be created for each student and will address applicable employability skills, including, but not limited to, (a) the application of academic and technical knowledge and skills, (b) career knowledge and navigation skills, (c) 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning and innovation skills, and (d) personal and social skills. The personalized learning plan will also include safety trainings appropriate to the WBL experience as covered by the supervising teacher, the workplace mentor, or both, and as outlined in the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.
- e. **Student Assessment Using Multiple Measures.** Students must exhibit work readiness knowledge, attitudes, and skills as determined by the supervising teacher and workplace mentor and consistent with the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide before beginning a WBL experience. During the experience, students will practice the employability skills identified in their personalized learning plan. Students will demonstrate their knowledge and skill attainment through the development of artifacts and/or portfolios that may include, but are not limited to: work products,

evaluations, original research, reflections, and presentations as outlined in the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.

- f. Evaluation of Program Quality. Local boards of education will adopt a process for evaluation and assessment to ensure WBL experiences are of high quality for the student. Recommended evaluation tools are provided in the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.

## 6. INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

Schools will strive to integrate the curriculum, especially during the ninth and tenth grades. Teachers are encouraged to integrate the curriculum both within a subject and across subjects. Teachers are encouraged to work in teams to plan and deliver instruction.

Policy Implications:

- a. Schools are encouraged to integrate curriculum within subject areas.

Examples are:

- an integrated math curriculum consistent with national standards
- an integrated science curriculum consistent with national standards

- b. Schools are encouraged to integrate curriculum across subject areas.

Examples are:

- a program for 9th graders taught by a team consisting of teachers of English, math, science, social studies, and a technical subject.
- an integrated American history and English block
- a math, science, and technology block.

## 7. EXTRA SUPPORT TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS

Teachers work together in teams to personalize learning, and students assume more responsibility for their own learning. Extra help and extra time will be provided for students needing such accommodations, and all students will be held to the same high standards.

Policy Implications:

- a. Schools will seek ways to personalize the high school experience, including the extension of middle school concepts and practices to the high school. Teachers working in teams, for example, will have the opportunity to get to know students better and meet their needs more appropriately.
- b. Students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade unprepared for rigorous high school work and/or students who are anticipated to experience difficulty in passing the state end of course assessments will be given extra help and extra time so that they can perform at grade level. Students will be identified through the EXPLORE or

ReadiStep tests as well as other appropriate assessments. Schools are encouraged to experiment with ways to accomplish this including but not limited to:

- high school readiness programs during the summer prior to 9th grade
- extended time to master challenging courses, with elective credit given for the additional units
- tutoring by teachers, peers or community volunteers during school, before and after school, and on weekends.
- an accelerated program to bring 9th grade students up to grade level
- computer assisted programs

- c. The state will encourage and assist schools in developing innovative methods to provide extra help and extra time for students requiring it. A combination of federal, state, and local resources will be used for this purpose.

## 8. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Assessment will reflect the concept of teaching and learning as collaboration between teachers and students. Assessment will be an integral part of instruction. In addition to paper and pencil examination, assessment may include portfolios of student's work, performances, and demonstrations, as well as online assessments. Schools are encouraged to develop graduation requirements that include demonstrations of competency.

### Policy Implications:

- a. State and local assessments will measure higher order learning and accumulated complex accomplishments rather than testing samples of discrete skills.
- b. In accordance with T.C.A. §49-6-6001 “(E)very public school student shall take a series of three (3) examinations, one (1) administered at grade eight (8), one (1) administered at grade ten (10), and one (1) at grade eleven (11). These assessments shall be approved by the commissioner of education and provide educators diagnostic information to assist in developing interventions for the purpose of increasing high school graduation rates and improving student preparation for postsecondary achievement.”

Schools will develop interventions for students who are not performing to the level needed to be on track to reach readiness benchmarks. The intervention plans for students who have not progressed sufficiently will be adjusted to better assist students to reach readiness benchmark scores.

- c. Schools will develop and use multiple means of student assessment. Schools are encouraged to use portfolios of student work, interdisciplinary projects and other demonstrations to document student progress throughout the four-year high school program. Multiple assessments could be embedded in regular courses.
- d. Writing will be a part of local school assessment in all subject areas; teachers will be trained in holistic scoring. All eleventh grade students will participate in the state writing assessment.



- e. End-of-course examinations will be given in English I, English II, English III, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, U.S. History, Biology I, Chemistry and Physics. Further, the results of these examinations will be factored into the student's grade at a percentage determined by the State Board of Education in accordance with T.C.A. §49-1-302 (2).
- The end-of-course test grade will count 20% of the second semester grade for the 2009/2010 and the 2010/2011 school years and 25% of the second semester grade in subsequent school years.
  - Students will not be required to pass any one examination, but instead students must achieve a passing score for the course in accordance with the State Board of Education's uniform grading policy.
  - Students successfully completing college courses may, by RULE 0520- 01-03-.06(b), substitute earned college credits for high school credits.
  - Only students who are enrolled in a course with an associated end-of-course examination shall take the end-of-course examination. Students enrolled in a substituting course without an end-of-course examination explicitly tied to the state board of education approved curriculum content standards of that course shall not take an end-of-course examination. This exemption applies to all substituting courses, including, but not limited to Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, and dual credit courses.

## 9. SCHOOL-WIDE IMPROVEMENT

Each high school will develop a shared mission and vision, school-wide goals, and a school improvement plan that is based on a needs assessment framed around the High School Policy's Elements of School-Wide Reform. The entire school staff will work together with parents and community members to develop an improvement plan that reflects the goals of the school, focuses on the Tennessee Curriculum Standards, links to system wide goals in the local school board's five-year strategic plan, and moves the school toward total implementation of the Elements of School-Wide Reform. In working for continuous improvement, the school will collect and use student assessment information, program evaluation information and other appropriate data.

### Policy Implications:

- a. When the mean of the teacher-assigned grades and the mean of the end-of- course assessment results are significantly different as determined by State Board of Education policy, the school must develop and implement strategies in the School Improvement Plan to ameliorate such differences. Until such time that the State Department of Education recommends, based upon an appropriate statistical analysis, and the State Board of Education approves an acceptable measure of disparity, schools and school systems should consider differences between 10 to 15 or more points to be too large and develop and implement strategies through the School Improvement Plan to ameliorate such differences.

- b. In developing school-wide goals and a school-wide improvement plan, schools are encouraged to draw upon the ideas of SREB's High Schools That Work, the Coalition of Essential Schools principles, the Paideia concept, the Model Schools Network, and other ideas appropriate for a particular school. Schools are encouraged to network with other schools to share ideas and exemplary programs.
- c. Schools and school systems are encouraged to consider the optimal size of high schools. To support student affiliation and academic achievement, high schools should consider organizing themselves into smaller units, such as schools within schools, career academies, and small learning communities.
- d. For the continuous improvement of schools, the schools will collect and use student assessment information, such as diagnostic tests and portfolios of student work, and program evaluation information regarding student advisement, courses taken, postsecondary enrollment, and job placement.
- e. To optimize student learning and teacher planning, schools are encouraged to consider alternative ways for organizing the school day. The number of class periods during the day, variations of the length of class periods, blocking interdisciplinary classes, and rotating schedules are among the options available.

## 10. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school will be a learning community, with administrators, faculty, and students engaged in continuous learning. The faculty will have adequate support for professional development and time to work together to improve teaching and learning.

### Policy Implications:

- a. To implement this policy, the faculty must have time to work together and adequate support for professional development.
- b. Professional development will be school and student focused, with needs defined at the school level and addressed in the school improvement plan. While the principal is responsible to ensure that professional development occurs, it will be planned and implemented collaboratively with the faculty.
- c. In providing professional development, schools may draw upon a variety of resources. State and local BEP funds and federal funds are available; state career ladder extended contract resources may be used for professional development when tied to assessment of student needs; and technical assistance can be made available by local businesses and industries.
- d. Schools will provide mentors to all beginning faculty members. Schools should:
  - provide a planned program of induction that extends through the early years of teaching
  - institutionalize evidence-based induction and practice
  - practice collaboration, communication, and collegiality
  - encourage self-reflection
  - develop and maintain partnerships with higher education